

# A Serious Case Review in Calderdale: Learning Lessons from Jeanette (Child M)

This briefing has been produced to provide practitioners and managers with the key learning from cases that have been considered and discussed at the Calderdale Safeguarding Children Board Case Review sub group.

A serious case review (SCR) takes place after a child dies or is seriously injured and abuse or neglect is thought to be involved and it is believed lessons can be learned from the way in which the local authority, their board partners or other relevant persons have worked together to protect the child.

This SCR is about a remarkable young woman, who will be referred to as Jeanette. With the help of a kindly and persistent police officer, a caring, competent and confident social worker and a patient and non-judgmental foster family, Jeanette came through a life full of difficulty, upset, neglect and sexual exploitation to arrive at a point in her life where she was able to assist the police in bringing 17 successful prosecutions for a variety of trafficking and sexual offences including rape.



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## What was the story?

Jeanette is a white British woman. As a child, she experienced neglect and physical abuse from her father. Between 2008-2011 (when she was 12 – 15 years old) Jeanette was sexually, physically and emotionally abused by a large number of men, she suggested over 100; 54 were arrested, 25 of whom were charged and 17 prosecuted.

## Background:

1995 Jeanette was born. Youngest of 3 children.

1996 Aged 1, Mother was diagnosed with a life changing disease

2000 Aged 5, Jeanette was bullied at school because of the way her mother walked (due to her medical condition)

2003 Aged 8, Mother's health deteriorated and Jeanette took on caring responsibilities

2006 Aged 11, Provided an increasing amount of care for her mother but this was not identified at the time. She also started to spend unsupervised time in the local park.

2007 Aged 12, Mother admitted to full time residential care home. Father was reported to be spending less time at home as he was living at his girlfriend's house. Older sister took responsibility for her *"My dad didn't live there for about a year. I was there with my sister. There was nothing to eat or anything like that. I started drinking, 11 or 12. I just went out and had a drink with friends from school. I drank to forget about things"*. She enjoyed attention from older men whilst in the park. Eldest sister also left home at about this time.

2008 Aged 13, Jeanette's mother died and, three months afterwards, her father moved out of the property permanently - leaving Jeanette with her 19-year-old sister.

2009 Aged 14, Children's Social Care (CSC) became involved to undertake a section 7 assessment and report for court (CA 1989) – Parental Responsibility (PR) awarded to Father (no-one else had PR). Agencies expressed concern that Jeanette was taking cannabis into school and she was at risk of CSE. School attendance was 37%. Allegation made against Father that he had physically abused Jeanette, that he misused drugs and he was a gambler *"...if I start talking I won't be able to stop and my dad would end up in prison"*. Jeanette went to live with her Aunt voluntarily and school attendance increased to 70%, however, 3 months later, she was reported to have moved back to live with her Father. Although professionals believed Jeanette was at risk of CSE, she denied it. School attendance dropped again. Case opened to CSC as Child in Need (s17, CA 1989).

2010 Aged 15, Jeanette was arrested for shoplifting and tested positive for cocaine. There were periods when she was reported 'missing'. She was assessed as being at 'high risk' of CSE. Jeanette was reported to have enticed a young girl into a car leading to a sexual assault. Incidents of CSE escalated and Jeanette reported *... 'I drank to forget about things, I drank lots so I couldn't feel the sex and I've never had sex sober'*. Professionals meetings were taking place, additional family support was provided. *'If I hadn't been drinking I would have seen it in a different light. I wouldn't have agreed to have sex if I hadn't had drink. It's not like I enjoyed the sex.'* *'In the hotel room, I had sex with one of the men, his brother and 3 other men. At this point, other males returned and had sex with me. I was not happy having sex but did not actually say no.'* *'The first man became violent, pinning me to the wall. He said if I didn't have sex with the second man, I'd have to walk home from Bradford.'*

2011 Following an assault by an unknown male, Jeanette arrived at school with a broken tooth and split lip and said she wanted to get out of the situation she was in. She was placed in Police Protection, accommodated (with Father's consent) and placed in a local authority foster placement.

Aged 16, Jeanette was moved out of area and made good progress with her new foster carers who listened to her and believed her. Jeanette began to make disclosures which led to 17 successful prosecutions.

## Overview and Analysis (using the Strengthening Families Approach)

### Strengths and Protective Factors

Whilst living with aunt for 3 months in 2010 school attendance improved suggesting a short period of stability and positive relationship with Aunt  
The Police Officer was a persistent and consistent figure  
Foster carers were non-judgemental, attentive to her needs and avoided putting her under any pressure which aided disclosure  
Jeanette engaged with most of the support on offer from different agencies

### Risk/Harm/Danger

Basic care and emotional needs not met at home, especially from age 11 leading to vulnerability  
Jeanette lacked parental supervision and boundaries at home  
Formed unhealthy attachments with older men in park aged 12  
Drinking and smoking cannabis from 12 which led onto heavier substance misuse  
Father physically abusive  
Returned to live with abusive father June 2010  
Sexually exploited and physically abused by a number of men over a long period

### Grey Areas

The lived experience of Jeanette's early childhood and abandonment by her Father at a critical point in her life is not understood  
Jeanette was a young carer and then experienced bereavement of mother – impact not known

### Complicating Factors

Mother diagnosed with life changing disease resulting in premature death  
Father emotionally and physically absent  
Safeguarding procedures not consistently followed  
Lack of systems to respond adequately to CSE  
Shop lifting incident resulted in criminal response (but developed supportive relationship with worker)  
During 2010 and 2015, safeguarding arrangements in Calderdale were assessed as 'inadequate' – this is reflected in some of the responses to Jeanette's situation

### Voice of the Child

Jeanette's behaviour reflected the adverse circumstances she was in e.g. school attendance fluctuated and deteriorated to 37% after transition from Primary to Secondary school; she went missing from home on several occasions  
Jeanette made a number of clear statements that indicated she was being trafficked for sexual exploitation

### Analysis

Drop in school attendance coincided with an escalation of CSE  
Disagreement between professionals about the level of risk and how the risks should be managed  
Information was shared but not analysed and the implications for Jeanette were not understood.  
Lack of decisive action and management oversight  
Lack of professional challenge and escalation  
Drink and drugs were used to manipulate and control - 'sex happens when she is so intoxicated and drugged that saying no is not an option'

## Conclusion

- The review found that the way in which children are now protected from CSE in Calderdale bears no relation to the approach of 2011. There is now considerable awareness in all agencies about risks, a dedicated multi-agency sexual exploitation team and considerable cross border approach to the issue.
- This review considered the relevance of race and culture and concluded that the key issue in this case was related to illegal drug activity and gender rather than race. Similar to previous abuse in religious establishments and children's homes this is institutional abuse.
- Young people need assistance to understand the complexities of informed consent.

## Learning for Professionals and Multi-Agency Working

- Academic research into the cultural identity of perpetrators of localised grooming is required
- Accurate statistics relating to perpetrators criminality and the use of illegal drugs in CSE should be used to inform future work and to disrupt CSE activity
- Professionals (including adult workers) need to be able to: identify and act upon drug and/or alcohol use; make referrals to relevant agencies; understand issues of child sexual exploitation; persevere with young people and assist them to see they are not responsible for the abuse; use the escalation procedure when necessary
- At Jeanette's request, a version of the full report to be produced for young people to raise their awareness of CSE and her story.

## Relevant Tools and Multi-Agency Responses for this case include:

- [CSE Risk Assessment](#)
- [Work of the CSE Hub and Team](#)
- [Report intelligence re: CSE](#)
- [Family Group Conference](#)
- [Professionals Meetings](#)
- [Continuum of Need and Response](#)

## For more information about Serious Case Reviews and this case (Child M) visit:

<http://www.calderdale-scb.org.uk/professionals/serious-case-reviews/>

